

Roundsman Clancy's Catch

A Detective Story That Comes Out the Other Way

AND after Sergeant McCann had plenteously expectorated he spake thus:

"'Twould be a fairly dacint yarn if A. Cooney Doyle or any of them other boys told it. I bet if one o' thim story sharks had holt o' these points like I have, he'd write a mighty nice piece for some paper. Only, thim chaps always seems t' hand it to th' copper in uniform and make the public believe he's the real late lamented when it comes to aven the ordinariest kind av intelligence; while this thing I know about was all th' other way about.

You fellers that haven't came in contact with the circumstances can't guess how sore all this twaddle about Inspector This and Inspector Totherthing an' th' ginerall stupidity av ivery man that wears blue an' brass has made us men on th' reg'lar dirt-doin', brick-poundin' force. Whiniver th' architect av a tale has wanted a picture av ox-dumbness jisht to show how keen his long-nosed, dope-eatin' hero is by contrast, he has rung in a polaceman that couldn't 'a' tracked a drove av crippled elephants through three foot av snow. Huh-uh. Mister Reg'lar Roundsman would report to 'is chief that th' tracks was made by a field-mouse, and would arrest th' first 'possum he seen, on suspicion. That's th' kind av idees these crime-writers has held up to th' youngsters that is supposed t' have a bit av pathrism instilled into thim along with their other education.

One av th' sorest av us all was Clancy. Clancy was red-headed an' low-voiced—a combination bad to stack against if you're lookin' for an aisy-mark or are afeard av a scrap. That'll do to remember. They wasn't a minute in th' day that Clancy was off av his beat that he wasn't either reading, working in th' gym or cussing thim fool writers. Sometimes we thought maybe Clancy was gettin' off his nut, he took is to heart so. Sometimes, too, whin he'd jusht finished reading some line o' stuff that ought t' help a feller, or when he'd put 'imself out a good deal to find out somethin' around town that'd stand him in hand good if anything iver came up about certain slippery parties, he would say, grittin' 'is teeth:

"But what's th' ust? We're all av us fools—dam fools. This uniform takes th' place av th' gray jeans unyforms av th' idjit asylum. All th' smart-alecks what writes stories tells us so."

An' then he'd go at th' punchin' bag, hell fer leather.

BUT Clancy's chance come. You remember th' Lavigne murder? I thought so. That was what brung th' chance. Th' thing, you remember—ugly thing, too—come at night, a mile west at a place called Lavigne's Culvert. A little creek crawls 'nunder a little stone vi'duct, then runs over a rock-bottom down a pretty steep side hill covered with little timber. Though 'twas late in the spring, they was snow on whin th' killing was did. Funny time fer a killin', too. Me an' Clancy was sint out by his Nibs to look after th' case. As we started, Clancy mumbles t' me:

"Here's where two dumb brutes wastes car fare for th' department. We'll show th' wurruld what fools we are. Av course we won't know that ol' Lavigne is dead till we ask some plain-duds snoop that'll look pityin'ly on us an' ask his private secretary to make notes av our stupidity, for his nixt book."

Well, when we go to th' place where old Lavigne was layin' so dead that even a blue-coat didn't have a great deal av doubt av it, who does we see but old Hawkeye Harkins, him that has such a cracked-up newspaper rep, standing off an' lookin' at th' body. Whin we come up, he was busy deductin'. He paid no manner av attention to us except to wave us silently back for fear we might spoil th' tracks. I heard Clancy's teeth grittin' like a sheep eatin' corn, but I seen that he, too, was busy with 'is eyes.

At last when Mister Smarty had finished deductin', he come over t' us an' said, with th' sort av patternizin' smile a feller uses whin he's playin' wid a baby or askin' a dog t' jump through a hoop: "Well, my men, what do you make av it?"

"I think," said Clancy with 'is softest voice, "I



By Strickland Gillilan

think, as nearly as a jibberin', uniformed fool can think, that th' man was killed, if at all, by a blunt instrument like a stiletto or a piece of cheese or a mountain howitzer, an' that he died suddenly but lingerin'ly. I think also—please correct me if I stray—that th' murderer was a little child eight feet high, walkin' in it's sleep—a blonde child with black hair. An' that th' double-dyed villain, after makin' this divvle av a mistake, must have gone away in an airship or struck th' blow from a great distance, hand-to-hand, because he left no powder marks from his dagger or tracks on th' ground."

All this, mind you, without turnin' a hair or lettin' go a bit av th' child-like innocence av thim blue Killarney eyes av his; an' th' snow that full av tracks a blind man could have seen 'em!

Th' fly-cop's jaw was hangin' down an' his eyes bulgin' out an' layin' down on his cheeks t' rest. It was th' work av a lifetime t' kape a straight face on me head.

BEFORE th' plain-clothes atmosphere works had started t' runnin' full time again, Clancy wint on:

"Now what can we do fer ye in th' way av runnin' errands, Mister Wiseman? Can we go find out fer ye frum a plumber in th' old Indiana village where Lavigne formerly lived, who was th' dintist that put th' soft-fillin' in 'is two back teeth the week after he had bought a load av hay from a cross-eyed farmer wid a strawberry mark? Any important matters like that, that may have a bearin' on th' case, though we haven't sinse enough to see it, us fools would be glad to attend to."

With that, an' without waitin' to think what Harkins thought av it, Clancy turned and began to walk parallel to th' line av tracks leadin' to and from th' body av old Lavigne. Th' coroner come jisht thin, an' Harkins, madder than th' wettest hen that iver fell in a rain barrel, turned an' stomped back to th' street car line.

Clancy was all eyes now. He had

walked back to a certain spot where th' trail was closest th' brook, an' was lookin' back an' forth, from one to th' other. After he had looked at it a good while, he whistled a bar or two av "Irish Mollie," an' turned to me with a funny look in 'is eyes:

"McCann," says he, "would you mind goin' back t' town as if nothin' had happened, an' tell th' chief that if he'll excuse me from roundsman duty th' day I'll bring back that pig-sticker before night?"

"Here, here," I says, "I'm no plain-clothes stenographer takin' notes on a deducer!"

"Deducer your grandmother," says Clancy. "I mean what I say, an' hain't recitin' no mellydrummer. If I'm not as good as me wurrd off comes me blue an' down goes me confession that we're as big fools as th' books says."

Thin he turns an' goes rapid up th' hill, follerin' th' stream. I, not knowin' what t' do, thinks a bit an' says to meself:

"McCann, you've always believed yerself, an' why shouldn't I believe a better man?"

SO I goes back to town an' reports to th' chief as Clancy has told me. An' as I was reportin', there set ol' Hawkeye Harkins, who had been makin' complaint to th' chief about how Clancy had mistreated 'im. Hawkeye hears me report, an' laughs scornful, buttin' in, to th' chief, like this:

"Preposterous! Why, th' man who did that murder—if it was a murder, an' not suicide—has put many a weary mile between him an' th' scene of his dastardly deed," he says.

But the chief nasties up a bit at that, fer he's some fond o' Clancy, an' he says:

"Mister Harkins, I have always found Mister Clancy a man av his wurrd. As to th' charges you bring against 'im, I'll say that I'll take thim up at my discretion, after Mister Clancy has returned to speak for 'imself."

Then ol' Harkins starts t' stalk out, stately, whin th' desk telephone bell rings an' this is what me an' th' wise guy hears at th' chief's end av th' line:

"Yes—Clancy? Sure. What! Got his confession, too? Yes, I'll send th' wagon right out to Forty-eighth street an' get you an' him. How's that? Two men? Sure. We'll send a whole platoon out if you want 'em, Clancy. And some bracelets? No—took a pair with you? Good boy. You—what?—O, confound it, he's 'ung off!"

Well, sir, you may believe me or not, but old Hawkeye Harkins was standin' in that doorway,

with a face as green as grass, which was th' fifth color it had been, beginnin' with red, since th' chief begun t' talk. He looks as if you could push 'im over with a piece o' darnin' cotton. He mutters somethin' feeble about "fake confessions," an' things like that, but he looks as if he was afeard it was all true. An' th' chief, with the look it would have done ye good t' see, turns to Mister Harkins an' says:

"I invite ye, as a fellow-member av th' profession," he says, "to stay an' see Mister Clancy bring in th' prisoner," he says.

An' Harkins stayed, hopin' it was a false alarm. But he didn't have long t' wait. In half an hour or so—though it seemed far longer t' all av us—here come th' wagon with th' men an' th'



"Well, my men, what do you think of it?"

prisoner. Clancy was stickin' t' th' chap with th' wrist ornaments an' tryin' not t' look proud—like a feller that jisht made a ten-strike in a bowlin'-alley. Barret an' Logan was clost by, an' whin they pulled up th' hat from th' face av th' guy, nobody was surprised except t' think we hadn't been better prepared for what we seen.

It was "Spider" Lavigne, alias Morgan, that th' gossips said had a good deal better right to th' name o' Lavigne than th' records would show or that th' now murdered man had ever admitted. And "Spider" was th' toughest nut in two or three counties and had been known to be bitter against th' old man. He had done time, between circus engagements—he was a dicknaller av an acrobat—in two or three pens, an' had been out only a month or so.

"Did you do it?" says th' chief to "Spider."

"Spider" nodded.

THEN ol' Hawkeye's face went green agin an' th' old man seen it an' grinned joyful at 'im.

Th' job av writin' down th' criminal's confession was a short one. In spite av th' warnin' that his wurrds wud be used agin 'im, he insisted on blurtin' it all out. An' when th' poor wretch was safe in th' murder cell, th' chief give Clancy's hand a grip that wud've put lots o' arms in a sling for a week, an' then wid' that warm feller feelin' said:



"Did you do it?" says the chief to the "Spider."

"Now!"

"It's a short yarn," says Clancy, winkin' contemptuously at ol' Hawkeye, who seemed uncomfortable under the collar. Lookin' at th' tracks, I seen they were double—one forward an'

one backwards. Some places th' backward tracks had slipped a half inch. The both tracks was by th' same feet. The doubled tracks stopped ten feet from th' crick. Right opposite th' place where they stopped was some mud-splashes on th' snow beside the crick. 'Uh-huh, Mister Badman,' I says, 'you've jumped sideways.' Now, ten feet is a hell av a jump, chief, especially sideways, an' I only knowed av one man that could make it. Then it all got clear to me. I seen 'Spider' as plain as print, in th' whole job. Follerin' up the stream, I comes to th' spring at the head av th' run, an' there all traces stops. I know he can't fly, but I see some snow scraped off av a dog-wood limb above, an' agin I'm after 'im. One av th' big branches av that dog-wood led right into a big beech that has a big limb reachin' over th' chimbley of the old Lavigne tenant hut. I goes all around th' house an' sees no tracks goin' away. I barricades all te' doors and windows except th' front, an' that I knocks in with a big stone I digs from th' snow—an here he is. I'll admit I was lucky in havin' my gun held on 'im when th' door busts in, as he was ready t' git me with his knife. He said he expected t' stay there till dark, an' then hike."

"Clancy," says th' old man, with a twinkle in his eye, "considering that you wear a blue uniform an' carry a night-stick, you have used almost human intelligence in this case—what, Mister Hawkeye Harkins, not goin', are you?"

Mutton Birds by the Millions

BY NEWTON FOREST

TO speak of a flock of birds forty miles in length and nearly half that many miles wide and flying so close together as to darken the earth like the passing of a storm cloud, brings to mind the days of the wild pigeon way back in the seventies. But that fine bird has passed away, as our robin, too, is passing, and one would now have to travel half the distance around the earth to see such flocks of birds. The birds of which I write are the sooty petrels which make their home on and about the Furneaux group of islands, situated to the northeast of Tasmania and under the government of that Australian state. These birds are called by the natives of these far-off islands "Mutton Birds," for the reason that they are exceptionally oily and have an odor resembling that of mutton. When full grown the mutton bird is about the size of the silver sea gull of our waters, and its color, at first a grayish black, with age becomes a jet black. Their most important breeding places are in the vicinity of Tasmania and New Zealand, in the latter island being of somewhat different variety and white instead of black.

Every year, about September 20th almost to a day, these vast flocks of birds seek their rookeries, and for more than a month the male and the female are busy in restoring their old nests or in building new ones. Where the soil is light and loose the nests are burrowed into the ground close together, but where there is sufficient shrubbery to afford shelter the birds simply deposit their eggs on the bare ocean beach. As the birds are away at sea in quest of food during the day the nest-making is carried on at night, and their chattering and squealing is so loud that it can be heard above the roar of the sea for miles. After the nests have been prepared the female birds each lay two eggs, when the pair of birds take turns at the hatching, usually the male bird taking the first turn. While thus engaged the female birds go in search of food, bringing in a supply at the close of each day to her mate. After the lapse of two weeks, by which time the first sitter has become considerably wasted, the partner re-



A great mass of birds covers the ground for miles. Heaves him, and the male bird then takes up the quest of food. As soon as the young birds emerge from their shells the full attention of both parents is bestowed on them, one bird always remaining at home while the other looks after the food supply. However attentive the parent birds may be, just as soon as the young ones are old enough to take care of themselves they are absolutely forsaken, and by this time so great has been the attention to the youngsters that they are too fat to move, and do not attempt to do so until starvation compels them to seek food. Then they soon wobble their way to the water edge and within a day or two have learned the art of flying.

After the hatching season every bird leaves the islands until the following September. Where they go is not known. Their flight is very swift and irregular, and if a bird strikes any obstruction the collision is usually fatal. So thick do they fly that the lighthouse at Goose Island, one of the Furneaux group, has to be protected with iron screening. Against this tower hundreds of birds meet death every night for a period of about two months each year.

The old birds are unfit for food on account of their toughness and strong fleshy-mutton taste, but great traffic is done in the young birds. The season for gathering the young lasts only about six weeks, but within that short time the inhabitants of the islands, numbering about five hundred souls, earn sufficient money to support them-

selves in practical idleness for the rest of the year.

The first stage of mutton birding is known as oiling. A stick pointing at one end and driven in the ground at the other serves as a kind of spit of skewer on which to fix the birds as they are gathered. As the young birds are taken their necks are broken by a quick and skillful jerk of the hand, and they are then fixed to the stick by their beaks. When a couple of hundred birds have been hung up in this manner the oil is extracted by squeezing firmly the body of the bird and passing the hand gradually along towards the neck until the oil exudes from the beak. It takes about 100 birds to produce a gallon of

oil. This oil sells for twenty-five cents a gallon.

The next state of the work is called fattening. This means that the outer coating of the birds, which is a thick layer of fat, is taken off. This fatty substance is boiled down in the same manner that hogs' fat is rendered into lard. This process results in a tallowy substance, which has also a commercial value. The bodies of the birds are then dressed, salted down and packed in barrels for shipment, just enough being stored away on the islands to last the inhabitants until the next season. These birds are shipped to the coast towns of Australia, where they are used for food chiefly in mining districts, where fresh food is hard to obtain and where the mutton-birds are used as a substitute for salt pork.

About one-half of the inhabitants of the islands where the mutton bird industry is carried on are whites and the remainder half-cast descendants of the aborigines of Tasmania. The mutton birders are required to pay a government license of \$2.50 a year each, and the taking of eggs from the nests is punishable by a fine. The birds are so tame during their abode on the islands that one may walk amongst them and gather the young ones without causing the flock the least alarm. Notwithstanding the protection accorded the birds by the government their numbers are diminishing year by year. This can hardly be wondered at when every year more than a million young birds are captured and killed for their meat and oil.